Extra charges levied on passengers

3184. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government would reconsider levy of unfair hidden railway charges aimed at propping up its revenue like levy of superfast surcharges on trains running at average of less than 55 kms. per hour;

(b) whether more than 360 designated superfast trains fetch Rs. 520 crore extra without adding anything to the running cost;

(c) whether there is any rationale in levying return journey surcharge; and

(d) the Tatkal scheme in which 30 per cent of berths are kept aside and sold at Rs. 150 extra for sleeper and Rs. 300 for AC classes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Surcharge is levied on trains designated as superfast trains having higher average speed.

(b) During year 2008-09, superfast trains fetched a revenue of around Rs. 243 crores. The running cost including fuel cost of superfast trains are more than the ordinary trains.

(c) To recover the additional expenditure involved in maintenance and continuous upgradation of a network system, enhanced reservation fee for the tickets booked for journeys originating from other than the ticket booking station was levied.

(d) The extent of accommodation varies with the demand in various classes and trains subject to a ceiling of 30%. Unutilized Tatkal accommodation gets released to general RAC/Waiting list passengers at the time of preparation of charts.

The Tatkal charges have been levied with a view to make cornering of tickets unremunerative for touts/unscrupulous elements. Action has also been initiated to reduce these charges as per announcements made in the Rail Budget 2009-10.

Gauge conversion of rail line in North Eastern States

3185. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that about half of the railway lines in the North-Eastern States comprise of metre gauge lines;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the main purpose of carrying essential commodities and construction material cannot be served for want of broad gauge lines;

(c) the problems of gauge conversion in the Lumding-Badarpur sector and the extent of sufferings caused to the people; and

(d) how Government propose to get over the problems and expedite conversion works?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes, Sir.